## YEAR PLAN

### MSU SRA Arts and Science

### Vikita Mehta

### 2021-2022

(July 13, 2021)

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OFFICE OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCE CAUCUS LEADER INTRODUCTION

Dear Arts and Science Students and Members of the Assembly,

I’m super excited to represent Artsci on the SRA this year, advocate for causes that are important to my constituents, and get all your voices heard! While this year plan is an initial set of goals and action items informed by my own concerns, the concerns of past SRA Arts and Science caucus leaders, as well as those of Arts and Science students, please note that I am more than open to adding to the plan or restructuring it to better fit the needs of my constituents. Artscis, I would love to hear your thoughts on this plan so please send me an email or message to discuss! For my fellow members of the assembly, please reach out if you have similar goals and objectives – I would love to collaborate!

Looking forward to a semi-normal year of less Zoom, more hugs, and exciting student politics!

Vikita Mehta,

SRA Arts and Science 2021-2022

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GOALS

**SASSex Specific**

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| **Objective 1** | **Increasing the transparency of SASSex meetings** |
| Description | * In response to concerns in a 2020-21 Artsci survey about a lack of meeting and financial transparency in SASSex meetings, I would like to ensure that meeting minutes are posted to the SASSex website on a timely basis and graphics are made to ensure that SASS is fully informed |
| Benefits | * A more informed student body * Artsci students becoming more comfortable joining SASSex or joining meetings as they know what is happening and how they can contribute |
| Difficulties | * Keeping up with the secretary and communications director to ensure that minutes and graphics are being posted throughout the year * Ensuring that the minutes/graphics are succinct so that they are engaging for students, increasing readership |
| Long-term implications | * A more organized, accountable, and up to date SASSex * More overall engagement and interest in SASSex activities |
| How? | * Consult with the president, secretary, website administrator, and communication director of SASSex to create guidelines for minutes and graphics, as well as a schedule for meeting minute uploading and graphic posting * Have semester check-ins with the above directors to mitigate any challenges along the way |
| Partners | * President, secretary, website administrator, and communication director of SASSex |

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| **Objective 2** | **Getting SRA info to Artsci students** |
| Description | * There is a lot of important information from SRA meetings, and it is mainly our SRA Observer’s role to inform SASS. This means sustaining an engaging and clear platform in which to share SRA information * We also want to continue working towards making this information simpler to understand and access   + Ex. Posting short, engaging updates after each SRA meeting and having a channel to get continuous feedback * Having clear and consistent office hours is also always a needed addition for transparency and accountability * We did have an SRA Artsci (SASSwatch) podcast, but for the high time investment and low engagement, Adeola (the past caucus leader) and I realized there may be better ways to inform Artsci (Instagram posts, Tiktok videos) * Asking MSU committees to also provide short updates would be a new addition – creating graphics with what all the committees have been up to would be very informative since unfortunately a lot of important and impactful change happens without student knowledge * Developing an SRA Committee on SASSex would also be helpful as there are many initiatives in this plan that require a great deal of time and more people helping and contributing is ideal – this also increases student engagement in SRA activities |
| Benefits | * Students being aware of what is happening in the SRA, resulting in a more engaged student body |
| Difficulties | * Engagement – often posts only get a few likes, so ensuring we are posting on multiple platforms (Facebook and Instagram (with Instagram stories) is essential so that more people see the posts. Using different media (videos and graphics) may increase this engagement. |
| Long-term implications | * More overall engagement and interest in SRA activities, and thus increased involvement and advocacy in the SRA from MSU members |
| How? | * Work with the SRA Observer to plan a posting/media creation schedule to ensure that we are diversifying our media and posting enough to garner high engagement from students * Posting graphics at the end of each meeting * Posting pre-meeting announcements to increase viewership of the SRA meetings |
| Partners | * SRA Observer (to be elected) |

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| **Objective 3** | **Enhancing accessibility in online and in-person Artsci classes** |
| Description | * Accessibility for neurodivergent folks in Artsci has been a topic of concern for me and many of my peers. Last year, Adeola and I created an online Accessibility Guidebook (<https://sway.office.com/F8NO9KxGErwsBcRF?ref=Link&loc=play>) for online teaching and learning, and I would like to gain feedback and consult with neurodivergent groups on campus to improve it in all the ways we can. * Online learning has incidentally made learning more accessible for many neurodivergent folks. I want to ensure this accessibility carries through during transitions to in-person learning, and modify the successful accessible elements of virtual learning to an in-person environment. * As someone who is involved in the disabled community and accessibility initiatives at McMaster, I am very driven to see positive outcomes with regards to this objective. |
| Benefits | * Increased accessibility for all students * Facilitating a more inclusive environment in the short and long term |
| Difficulties | * The difficulties include ensuring that the accessibility tips in the guidebook are implemented in all Artsci classes, and that professors actually take the time to read the book |
| Long-term implications | * Creating a long-term resource that can always be updated and re-used for future years of accessible teaching and learning * Using the virtual COVID-19 landscape to make long-term improvements to accessibility in Artsci |
| How? | * Consulting with neurodivergent groups and related stakeholders on campus to improve the guidebook, and identify elements of online-learning that can be modified and implemented to an in-person environment |
| Partners | * Maccess, Kate Brown, Student Accessibility Services |

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| **Objective 4** | **Increasing diversity, inclusion, and equity in Artsci curriculum and admissions** |
| Description | * There has been some concern in the Artsci admissions process regarding the diversity within the selection committee, and whether the selection process is equitable for socioeconomically disadvantaged and racialized students. In light of the new Equitable Admissions for Black Applicants stream in the Health Sciences Program, I am interested in working with administration to determine if there are certain mechanisms we could use to increase diversity and equity in the Artsci admissions process. * There have been concerns from fellow Artscis that Arts and Science core course curriculum is very Eurocentric, and I want to ensure that given the different cultures and experiences of the Artsci student body, that their cultures and ideologies are also represented in the curriculum (especially in the following courses: Practices of Knowledge, Global Challenges, and Social and Political Thought). |
| Benefits | * Increased diversity and equity * More valuable and relatable educational experiences for all students |
| Difficulties | * Changing very rooted and fixed selection processes with the support of administration * Ensuring that if some communities are prioritized in equity initiatives, other marginalized communities do not feel ignored |
| Long-term implications | * A more equitable admissions process * A more diverse student body, which enhances overall education especially in Artsci, a discussion and inquiry-based program |
| How? | * Consulting with Administration and other faculties to outline ways in which equity in admissions can be enhanced * Consulting with marginalized individuals in Artsci to discuss ways in which they would like to see admissions and curriculum improved * Discuss the recent curriculum focus group with Artsci administration and outline the key takeaways and next steps to make curriculum more inclusive |
| Partners | * Equity and Inclusion Committee on SASSex (Jr and Sr Program Advisors), Artsci Administration, Health Science Administration |

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| **Objective 5** | **More accessible study spaces for Artsci students** |
| Description | * This is a point that has been worked on for the past two years by past caucus leaders. In 2019/20, there was a study room booking schedule available but many students didn’t know about it or how to use it. I want to ensure that going forward in an in-person environment, students are aware of the study room booking system and there are enough rooms/time-slots to meet the demand. |
| Benefits | * A way for students to reconnect socially and study when we go back to in-person learning * Provides another space for Artscis to convene for social and academic meetings when LRW closes (study sessions, clubs, musical, etc.) |
| Difficulties | * Reminding Artscis of the room booking system and monitoring its use to see how it can be improved, managing traffic, and determining what time of day is it the most popular * Working with administration to increase the hours of the room booking |
| Long-term implications | * A more connected Artsci community |
| How? | * Survey Artsci students to determine the preferences for study rooms (hours, etc.) * Work with administration to develop an improved study room booking system * Work with SASSex communications director to ensure that the information about the study rooms is publicized regularly |
| Partners | * Artsci administration, SASSex communications director |

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| **Objective 6** | **Host at least 1 SRA-related events for Artsci students** |
| Description | * Holding an event milk-and-cookies style at the beginning of the semester to solicit feedback on students wants and needs * We can also gain advocacy priorities that ArtScis want to see * If there is high engagement at the first session, we can also hold an end-of-year event where we can discuss what we’ve accomplished in the year as well as brainstorm improvements and suggestions for next year |
| Benefits | * Artscis can understand what the SRA does and is doing, plus can bring their interests to our knowledge to work towards * Constituents can also give us useful and relevant feedback in advocacy priorities * We’ll also have the chance to ask what events they want to see |
| Difficulties | * Make sure we are aware of booking time not conflicting with another early SASS event (unlikely) and using all the methods we can to ensure a good turn out (food, advertising, etc) |
| Long-term implications | * Re-building a good rapport with the ArtSci student body, opening communication channels |
| How? | * Potentially link with another SASS event to garner higher turn-out * Plan an event with SASSex VP Functions and the SRA Observer |
| Partners | * SASSex VP Functions, SRA Observer |

**SRA Specific**

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| **Objective 7** | **SRA Meeting Sustainability** |
| Description | * During non-COVID times, SRA voting was done on paper ballots, and often year plans (thick packages) were printed and given to each member of the assembly at each meeting, even though reducing waste has been a pinnacle of these times. * This initiative is using a secure online platform to support SRA voting from now on, especially when we go back to in person meetings * To piggy-back off of the work done by Adeola last year, I want to ensure that this gets implemented in MSU bylaws and we do not resort to paper communication when we return to in-person learning * If this policy is adopted for SRA meetings, it can also be discussed and applied to other MSU and MSU club meetings |
| Benefits | * Just a small change to promote increased sustainability within the SRA |
| Difficulties | * We might result to our old ways when going back in-person so reminding members of the assembly that online voting processes and ways of disseminating information worked just as well last year is important |
| Long-term implications | * This is a practice I would hope would be permanent, increasing sustainability in the SRA in the many years to come |
| How? | * Researching the bylaws and working with the BOD and MSU Speaker to ensure that this can be implemented in a more formalized way |
| Partners | * Board of Directors, MSU Speaker, Sustainable Education Committee |

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| **Objective 8** | **Implementation of SRA Observer Role in more faculty societies** |
| Description | * SRA Observer is a role unique to ArtSci, in which SASSex has the role with the aims of having the Observer mature into the SRA role the following year * Other faculty societies would highly benefit from this role, so helping faculties in the implementation of this role would be great |
| Benefits | * Having individuals getting familiar with the SRA with all its rules and proceedings is beneficial in making the one-year turnover less of a restart * Then you have individuals with the knowledge of SRA able to start to make change (it was incredibly useful in my experience) |
| Difficulties | * If the caucus members decide they don’t want or don’t think they need the role, then the initiative falls. * If not through faculty societies, these could be general observer roles elected through the MSU |
| Long-term implications | * More informed and prepared SRA members will be a benefit in many unique ways on the SRA |
| How? | * This would be a mid-term initiative, where I can ask current members if they feel they struggle with any part of their role (around Dec) and suggest their faculty society adopt a new role (SRA Observer) - to be implemented for election time in March |
| Partners | * SRA Members, Board of Directors |

**McMaster-Wide**

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| **Objective 9** | **Improving accessibility in teaching and learning McMaster-wide** |
| Description | * Since we have developed a strong accessibility resource in Artsci, I would like to see a similar online guidebook/set of guidelines implemented on a McMaster-wide level * Creating an accessibility guidebook for all McMaster professors and implementing aspects of the book as a mandatory part of their training * As stated in a previous objective, online learning has become a lot more accessible for neurodivergent folks and ensuring that some of these aspects can be modified for an in-person environment would be a key positive takeaway from COVID-19 |
| Benefits | * Improved learning experiences for neurodivergent folks and in some cases, all students |
| Difficulties | * Getting a guidebook approved on a McMaster-wide level would require implementation in bylaws and policy papers * Professors don’t usually want a longer training, so ensuring that the accessibility portion is succinct and also informative |
| Long-term implications | * Improved accessibility practices university-wide * More accommodating learning environment for students of all abilities |
| How? | * Consult with Kate Brown, Maccess, and VP Education about current accessibility practices and training requiremnets, and want can be improved * Ask SRA reps to send out surveys to their constituents about how their classes can be more accessible and use those findings to inform the guidebook and training * Formalize the training policy and the release of the guidebook |
| Partners | * VP Education, Maccess, Kate Brown, Macdemics, University Affairs Committee |

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| **Objective 10** | **Providing free menstrual products in MUSC bathrooms** |
| Description | * Many universities in Ontario provide free menstrual products in public washrooms. McMaster is far behind these strives to combat period poverty and gender inequality. * Currently, students can access free menstrual products in two places on campus: the WGEN office and the Student Wellness Center. The products from these locations are not accessible in emergency situations when a student is not prepared for a period. * Specifically, I would like to advocate for providing menstrual products (pads and tampons) accompanied by menstrual education posters in the female and gender-neutral washrooms in the McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC), a building has high student traffic and can be used to pilot test this initiative before implementation in more McMaster buildings * In addition, 2 menstrual equity motions were passed at MSU General Assembly, so there is definitely student concern around this topic * Last year, as SRA Observer, I developed a draft proposal to present to the BOD outlining the need for free menstrual products in MUSC, the costs, impact, etc., and plan to consult relevant menstrual equity groups on campus to improve the proposal before presenting it |
| Benefits | * A supply of menstrual products readily available in each bathroom would improve accessibility to products and alleviate some stress in unexpected situations. * A tangible effort to reduce the financial burden on students experiencing period poverty |
| Difficulties | * The cost is a big difficulty as there would need to be a large budget allocated to this initiative |
| Long-term implications | * Taking a tangible step towards gender equality at McMaster, hopefully to expand and improve in the years to come * Reducing financial burdens on menstruating students long-term |
| How? | * There have been past efforts to provide free products on campus so understanding why they haven’t been successful is the first step; speaking to the BOD, the MUSC staff, etc. * Consult with relevant stakeholders (Bleed Free, WGEN) to improve the proposal * Present the proposal to BOD and work with them to create a menstrual equity pilot project * Vote on a motion to approve this project |
| Partners | * Bleed Free, WGEN, MUSC staff, Board of Directors, University Affairs Committee |

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| **Objective 11** | **Increasing transparency regarding the investments of the MSU** |
| Description | * In light of the advocacy efforts of various McMaster student groups to hold the MSU and the university accountable for its commitment to divestment from fossil fuels as well as the discussions surrounding BDS, it is important that information about such investments are made public and accessible on the MSU website. It is important for the MSU to regularly update their investments so that students stay informed and can keep the MSU accountable on its efforts to divest from a variety of companies. |
| Benefits | * Increased accountability and transparency |
| Difficulties | * Auditing the figures posted on the website would be extensive but important to ensure that all information is accurate * This public information could potentially be controversial |
| Long-term implications | * Increased accountability and transparency practices would increase overall trust in the MSU |
| How? | * Working with MacDivest to push the MSU to release such information publicly on their website * Develop a committee or subset or an existing committee to review and update these investments on a regular basis |
| Partners | * Finance Committee, MacDivest, Board of Directors |

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| **Objective 12** | **Improving course selection on Mosaic** |
| Description | * A significant concern from Artscis is the chaos that ensues during course selections whereby students are not put on waitlists and have to keep checking for their courses to open up. Creating a waitlist system or consulting with relevant stakeholders about ways to improve the system is something I hope to do. |
| Benefits | * Lower stress during course selection and making students feel more at ease since they are on a waitlist and don’t have to keep checking mosaic for course openings |
| Difficulties | * Implementing a complex and large feature on Mosaic may be a long-term goal and may not be feasible in a short timeline |
| Long-term implications | * Higher satisfaction with McMaster and its course enrolment process * Lower overall stress |
| How? | * Consult with the IT department and stakeholders involved with Mosaic |
| Partners | * UTS, Mosaic team |

**Long-term planning**

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| **Overarching Vision 1** | **Developing robust feedback systems that are regularly analyzed to improve the experiences of Artsci students and continuously evaluate the response to SRA and SASSex initiatives** |
| Description | * It is important that the plans and initiatives I undertake reflect the wants and needs of students, so developing a long-term and sustainable feedback system (google form) that is always available and accessible to students is important. * Providing many opportunities and reminders for students to offer feedback is also necessary * Making sure that the feedback forms are very specific to questions I would like feedback to is important as often students don’t fill out the form because they are too general |
| Benefits | * Increased transparency and accountability in Artsci * More direct addressing of student concerns and response/feedback to SRA efforts |
| Year 1 | * Developing an anonymous google feedback form and regularly reminding students to fill it out on social media * Having a google form with very specific questions rather than broad questions can encourage students to fill it out as many students will not know what to write if it is entirely open-ended * Creating a schedule for regular feedback form checks to ensure we are checking these forms is integral to its success |
| Year 2 | * This feedback form system is still in use (with some in-person modifications such as a physical feedback box) |
| Year 3 | * Feedback form system is still in use * SRA is now meeting the direct concerns of students and getting regular feedback about how to improve their plans of action |
| Partners | * SASSex communications director |

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| **Overarching Vision 2** | **Increasing inclusion, accessibility, and equity in the Artsci program and McMaster community** |
| Description | * I want to ensure that teaching and learning is the most accessible and inclusive for all students, which is why I proposed improving the diversity of Artsci curriculum, improving the Accessibility Guidebook and expanding it for the McMaster community, and working with Artsci administration to make admissions more equitable. |
| Benefits | * Increased inclusion and accessibility in teaching and learning, better educational experience for all |
| Year 1 | * Developing the McMaster-wide Accessibility Guidebook * Working to improve accessibility training resources for professors * Understanding students’ concerns in the Artsci curriculum and creating actionable items to enhance the diversity of curriculum for implementation in the following years * Working with Artsci students and administration to understand the areas for improvement in the Artsci admissions process and developing actionable steps to ensure increased equity |
| Year 2 | * Professors are using accessibility training resources * Accessibility Guidebook is utilized and is available on the MSU website * Curriculum has been adjusted to enhance diversity * Changes in admissions have been formalized |
| Year 3 | * Professors are using accessibility training resources * Accessibility Guidebook is utilized and is available on the MSU website * There is a formal process at the end of each year to gain feedback from students about curriculum changes * Changes in admissions are being implemented |
| Partners | * Equity and Inclusion committee on SASSex, Kate Brown, Maccess, BOD, VP Education, Artsci Administration |

GOALS to strive for

**List 5 things that you would like to have prepared for the beginning of September**

* Menstrual Equity Proposal finalized
* A feedback form created and publicized
* Provided an opportunity for Artscis to give feedback on the year plan
* Consulted with VP Functions to set a date for an SRA event in mid-October
* Booked a meeting with Kate Brown to discuss the Accessibility Guidebook

**List 5 things you would like to have completed during the fall term (1st)**

* Consulted with relevant stakeholders about the menstrual equity proposal
* Made edits to the Artsci Accessibility Guidebook and a template for the McMaster-wide guidebook
* Created surveys to be sent to each faculty about accessibility in teaching and learning and what they would like implemented in a professor training session and the guidebook
* Had meetings with Artsci Admin about inclusion and diversity in the program and created tangible action items
* Created a system for SASSex meetings to be more transparent

**List 5 things you would like to have completed during the winter term (2nd)**

* A confirmed direction for the menstrual equity pilot project
* A completed accessibility guidebook with online and in-person learning sections
* A list of key points that will be implemented to increase the diversity of Artsci curriculum in the following year
* An implemented policy that prevents paper waste during SRA meetings (and other MSU and club meetings)
* A formalized investments page added to the MSU website

**Master Summary**

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| June | * Created an Artsci Instagram page |
| July | * Create Artsci SRA feedback form (specifically one for feedback on my year plan) |
| August | * Complete and finalize menstrual equity proposal |
| September | * Make improvements to the Artsci accessibility guidebook and consult with Maccess and SAS about improvements to accessibility that can be taken from virtual learning and implemented in in-person learning (add this to the guidebook) * Elect an SRA-Observer |
| October | * Consult with SASSex about improving transparency in meetings and develop a meeting minute/graphic posting schedule to ensure accountability * Mid/End of October: hold Artsci SRA event |
| November | * Consult with relevant stakeholders (Bleed Free, WGEN, MUSC staff, BOD) to improve the menstrual equity proposal * Meet with Mosaic team to address the course selection waitlist need * Meet with Artsci Admin about relevant concerns (admissions, curriculum, study room booking) and create an action plan moving forward * Speak to the BOD about formalizing a policy about reducing paper communication during in-person SRA meetings * Working with the Finance committee and BOD to make the MSU investments public on the MSU website |
| December | * Present the menstrual equity proposal to BOD and relevant stakeholders – create an action plan for moving forward |
| January | * Work with Kate Brown to create a McMaster-wide Accessibility Guidebook and finalizing it at the end of the month |
| February | * Garner feedback from constituents about the McMaster-wide Accessibility Guidebook and making relevant improvements |
| March | * Formalize the menstrual equity pilot project and forming a committee to organize the logistics of implementation in the following year |
| April | * Formalize the McMaster-wide Accessibility Guidebook and accessibility professor training * Create formal action items to be implemented by admin in response to the discussions of diversity and inclusion earlier in the year * Hold final Artsci SRA year-in-review event |